



LOOKING ACROSS THE NILE TO LUXOR TEMPLE

THE HERITAGE OF WESTERN ASIA

TO start the story of a new Asia with its heritage, to seek out deep hidden roots to understand the present greening and fruiting of a living tree, to begin the history of Asia's prose and poetry with the invention of the alphabet—this must be the idea of research professors and museum curators! It does sound just a bit curious, does it not? A moment's thought will make it clear that to understand fully and properly the heritage of the Western Asia of today, it is not sufficient that we look back merely to the dawn of history. The human factor is, indeed, important, though it is shifting and variable. But fully as important and far more basic and lasting in Western Asia's heritage than any scratching of human hands on the earth's surface are factors determined long before there were any humans, in the geological cycles of the past, factors which the science of palaeobotany and geology first discerned.

Many in the Orient itself, with plenty to do for present improvement, with little capital and inexperienced man-power to do with are weary of having their territory considered chiefly a mine for what to them are mere curiosities of antiquity. Among the leaders of the new Turkish Republic, the writer found men of broad interests and sympathetic understanding of the value of

history and excavations, but they feel that all knowledge of the past is in no way comparable in importance with the building of railways and factories in the present. Given the present financial and cultural situation of modern Turkey the much needed improvement leading to general progress in the present has the call on history and archaeology. A similar attitude has been manifested by some well-informed leaders of American finance and industry but a higher level of culture when attained would in turn demand a better understanding of a past inextricably linked with the present, and a just appreciation of many otherwise puzzling factors in present day life.

THE HERITAGE OF NATURE

And now the writer is fain to make reference to an article developed in the most modern commerce and industry, one of the very latest sources of power—our reference is to oil. It is a thing of the immediate present. Never before was the earth's surface so traversed by pipe lines, or dotted by tanks, tanks in oil stations, tanks on wheels, tanks on boat bottoms. Hard-headed business and romantic adventures, and the struggle of great powers for pre-eminence and prestige in the world, all are floating today on a smooth, iridescent sea of oil. Books are written about it, such as the *World-Struggle for Oil* by Pierre Espagnol de la Tramerie. No book dealing with the modern world can pass it by entirely. Its mention here is particularly fitting, because for good or ill, it plays a large and important part in the heritage of Western Asia.

And whence does it come? A friend, one of the few people whom the writer has known who maintained that he liked the smell of oil, claims that to him it bears the scent of the bowels of good old Mother Earth, not unpleasant to us human animals who live upon her generous bosom. The modern producer, who sends out expeditions to discover its whereabouts, may personally know little of its origins, but if he wants his business and his industry to rest on a sound basis he must in some way acquire a working knowledge of the stupendous forces that created the earth as it is today, and of the tremendous drama which through untold eons these forces enacted in creating the things of the earth that are the necessities and luxuries of today. We need not all overburden our